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Pitch Pine

Pinus rigida Mill

Family: Pinaceae

The genus *Pinus* is composed of about 100 species native to temperate and tropical regions of the world. Wood of pine can be separated microscopically into the white, red and yellow pine groups. The word *pinus* is the classical Latin name. The word *rigida* means rigid or stiff, referring to the cone scales. Pitch pine is one of the southern pines.

Other Common Names: Black Norway pine, black pine, hard pine, jack-pine, longleaf pine, longschat pine, mountain pine, northern pitch pine, Norway black pine, pech kiefer, pek-pijn, Pennsylvania yellow pine, pin a feuilles rigides, pin a l'aubier, pin raide, pin rigida, pino bronco, pino rigido, pino rogido, pitch pine, pitchpin, pond pine, red pine, regida pijn, ridge pine, rigid pine, sap pine, shortleaf pine, soderns gul-tall, southern yellow pine, torch pine, wiesen kiefer, yellow pine.

Distribution: Pitch pine is native to southern Maine west to New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania and southwest, mostly in the mountains, to southern Ohio, Kentucky, eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia and northwestern South Carolina. Also locally in extreme southern Quebec and extreme southeastern Ontario.

The Tree: Pitch pine trees reach heights of 80 feet, with diameters of 2 feet.

General Wood Characteristics: The sapwood of pitch pine is a yellowish white, while the heartwood is a reddish brown. The sapwood is usually wide in second growth stands. Heartwood begins to form when the tree is about 20 years old. In old, slow-growth trees, sapwood may be only 1 to 2 inches in width. The wood of pitch pine is very heavy and strong, very stiff, hard and moderately high in shock resistance. It also has a straight grain, medium texture and is difficult to work with hand tools. It ranks high in nail holding capacity, but there may be difficulty in gluing. All the southern pines have moderately large shrinkage but are stable when properly seasoned. The heartwood is rated as moderate to low in resistance to decay. The sapwood is more easily impregnated with preservatives.

Working Properties: It also has a straight grain, medium texture and is difficult to work with hand tools. It ranks high in nail holding capacity, but there may be difficulty in gluing.

Durability: The heartwood is rated as moderate to low in resistance to decay.

Preservation: The sapwood is more easily impregnated with preservatives.

Uses: The denser and higher strength southern pine is used extensively in construction of factories, warehouses, bridges, trestles, and docks in the form of stringers, and for roof trusses, beams, posts, joists, and piles. Lumber of lower density and strength finds many uses for building material, such as interior finish, sheathing, subflooring, and joists and for boxes, pallets, and crates. Southern pine is also used also for tight and slack cooperage. When used for railroad crossties, piles, poles and mine timbers, it is usually treated with preservatives. The manufacture of structural grade plywood from southern pine has become a major wood-using industry.

Toxicity: In general, working with pine wood may cause dermatitis, allergic bronchial asthma or rhinitis in some individuals

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Technology Transfer Fact Sheet



Center for Wood Anatomy Research

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